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THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB

# TORQUE TUBE



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# The 9th Cylinder

BY HARRY LOGAN (#651) EDITOR

**Dear Members:** Several of our members have had horror stories buying '37/'38 Buicks. One member bought a car advertised as "Best in the world. Immaculate." When the car arrived, it couldn't even be driven up the driveway. The car is now in a restoration shop.

A member in England bought a sedan from a US member. It was advertised: "New chrome, wiring, tires, upholstery. All electric's rebuilt. New paint." So he called the owner and was told on the phone and by letter and a video that the engine, clutch and transmission were rebuilt, and the car had new hub caps, all new plastic and a new banjo steering wheel. The new owner says the engine and transmission are bad, the cam shaft is so badly worn that the tappets cannot be set, the oil gallery is blocked so no oil gets to the rocker arms, the car has been side swiped and badly repaired, the paint is poor and chipped and in odd shades of green, the interior is old and moth eaten, the hub caps are pitted, the steering wheel is pitted and the plastic badly cracked. The transmission jumps out of first and third gears and the case is cracked etc, etc.

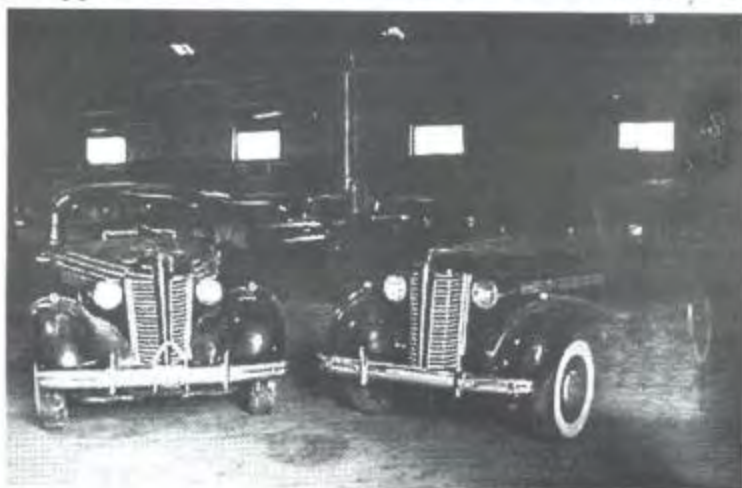
I am printing these stories to

warn all members to **NEVER** buy a car sight unseen. If you cannot view the car yourself, hire someone to look at it for you. Because once you buy a car, it is next to impossible to get your money back! *Caveat Emptor-Buyer Beware!*



This photo circa 1942 was offered for sale on eBay. It features soldiers in a parade in Hollywood. Note the unusual two tone paint job. The car has a VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) emblem on the door. Thanks to **Charles Jekofsky** (#524) in Oregon for sharing it.

Saw these two '38 Special Sedans for sale on eBay. The description reads: "Sold as a pair only. One price for both. (Reserve was \$11,000). These cars have straight 8 engines. One runs well, unsure about the other. New interior and some new parts on the engine and in the trunk. Questions? Call (713) 222-6044. 9 to 5 pm central time. Monday to Friday. Thanks to **Charles**



**Jekofsky** (#524) in Oregon for sharing this information.

This famous photo is called "Winter Visitors", Sarasota Beach, Florida, 1941 and was taken by noted photographer Marion Post Wolcott. It shows several la-



## TORQUE TUBE

FOUNDED IN 1980 BY DAVE LEWIS





dies getting ready for a picnic, using the running board of their 1938 Buick Sedan as a bench. Since they appear to be heavily clothed and the sky appears gray, one would assume that it was Winter. Judging from the bulging box on the table, the ladies appear to be poised for a feast. This photo was on a calendar of events to occur in the Museum and Arts Center of Wellesley College this Spring. Thanks to **Bayard Guild** (#1553) in Dover, MA.

This middle photo shows a 1937 Roadmaster Convertible Sedan Model 80C owned by **Jay Paris** (#1587). The photo was taken in Brunswick, Maine. Jay has owned this car since the early 1960's when he used it for transportation while in college.

Jay also owns this Buick Spring Lubrication Tool. "**LUBROCLAMP**" is embossed on the tool. It's listed as tool **J-595** in the 1937 Buick Shop Manual, page 3-7.



Meet **Dave Wettersten** (#887) from Hudson, Wisconsin. Until recently, Dave lived in St. Paul, Minnesota where this photo of him and his 1938 Special sedan was taken. Dave parked the car in the same spot that 64 years earlier another '38 Buick sedan was parked for an advertising photo. See the story on page 13.



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Check out the new **1937-1938 Buick Club** web site: <http://clibs.hemmings.com/1937-1938buick/>

Please send all articles, ads, subscriptions and inquiries, etc. to:

**The TORQUE TUBE**  
1005 RILMA LANE  
LOS ALTOS, CA 94022 USA

**You can reach Harry Logan by**  
**PHONE/FAX (650) 941-4587**  
**or by E-mail: [harrylogan@earthlink.net](mailto:harrylogan@earthlink.net)**

Editor:.....Harry Logan, #651

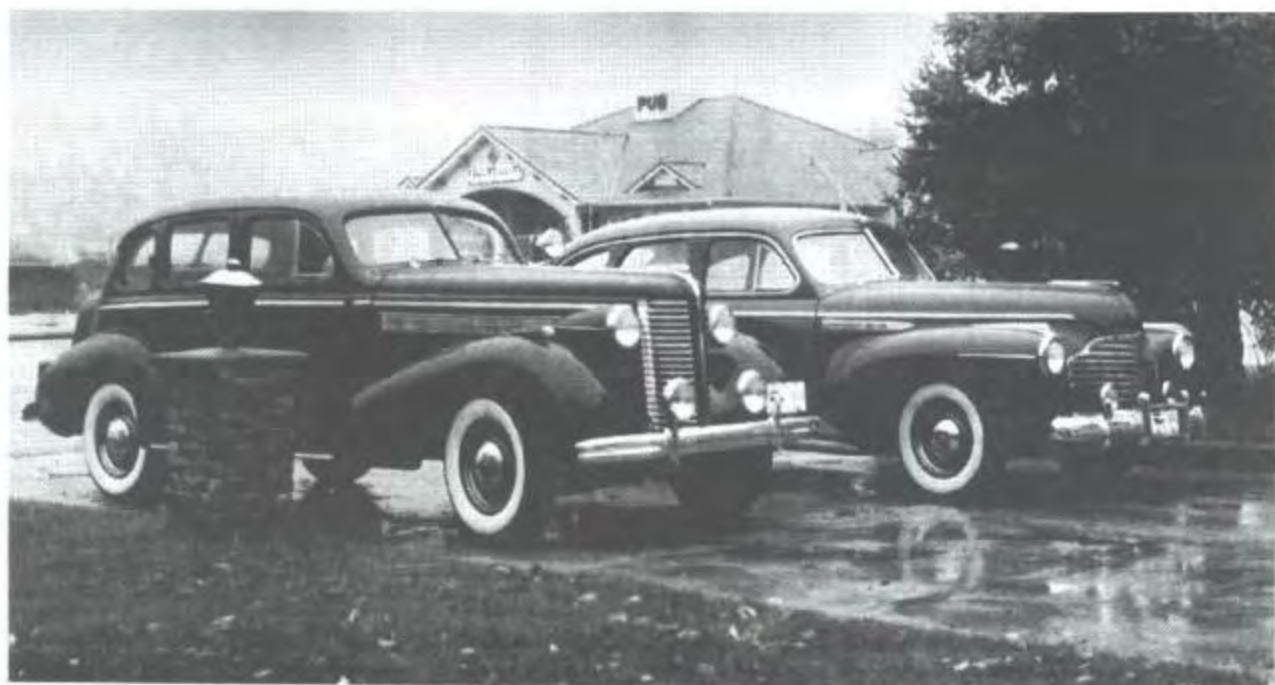
Art Director:.....Dug Waggoner, #10

Printer Liaison:.....Bill Olson, #427

Printer:.....Conrads Printing, Lancaster, Ohio

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These two McLaughlin Buicks, a '38 Special and a '41 belong to long time member **Dick Parkes** (#169) in British Columbia, Canada. After 25 years, he completed the restoration of the '38 just in time for his daughter's wedding last August. See his story on page 10.

Dick writes: "The Torque Tube was indispensable in putting my '38 back together. Most of it was disassembled over 25 years ago when I had a memory and was positive that I would remember how to put it back together again. Wrong!! I am also indebted to members of the Club from whom I purchased parts and services. Although this is an amateur restoration, with almost everything being done by myself and with the help of friends, it will never be a show winner. But I am pleased with the results. And after over 25 years in the process, it's amazing how much room there is in my garage now after everything has been bolted back on the car."

This ad appeared in the December, 1937 **MOTOR AGE** magazine. It's for a throttle control mounted in the end of the gear shift

lever in place of the regular ball. Easily installed, it provides control of the throttle and leaves the right foot free to operate the brake pedal. Turning the ball regulates the flow of gas, and the ball stays in the position turned until turned back to the "off" position, thus permitting a fixed throttle position for long drives. The first Cruise Control?

**José Pardo** (#558) in Cali, Columbia writes: "I was reading an article on aircraft engines by Mike Bush (The Ten Biggest Lies About Piston Aircraft Engines—[www.avweb.com/articles/englies.html](http://www.avweb.com/articles/englies.html)) and found

lie number 6 most interesting for those Buick owners or any other car owner for that matter, that start up their engines, say once a week, run them for a short time, not reaching their ideal working temperature and end up with a rusty and corroded engine that was exactly the opposite of what they intended. The understanding of the relationship of temperature/chemical reaction that takes place within the engine is very important and well explained by Mike Bush.

Mike writes: "Every time

## Gearshift Knob becomes Accelerator!

Here's an item everybody wants! Installed in few minutes by most anyone. Low-priced! Replaces present gearshift knob. Stays where turned to desired speed.

Makes Longer Trips Possible without tying or cramping! Permits driver to change sitting position. Relieves foot from accelerator.



Simple Turn of Knob Regulates Flow of Gas!

**ACE**  
Handy Drive  
Accelerator

No interference with foot accelerator or shifting. Makes possible shifting and acceleration in one operation. Works in one operation. Works on hills.

Get a Demonstrator for Your Car! If your Jobber hasn't it, send for literature and special demonstrator model. **JOBBERS:** Get our Liberal Proposition. **Ace Products Co., 629 Southard, Toledo, Ohio**



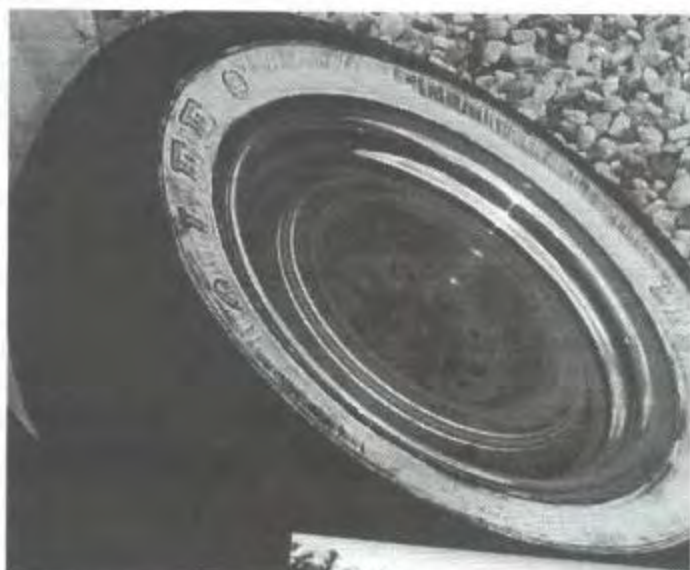
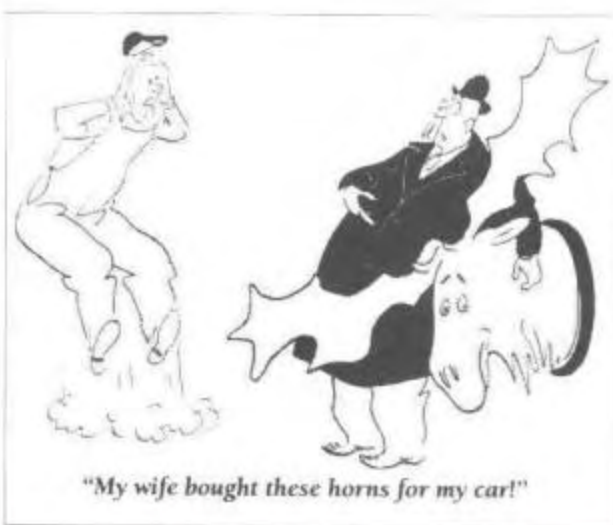
we shut down the engine, some water condenses inside the cooling engine and runs down into the oil pan. If we don't get rid of this water, there will be water build-up inside the engine. The water will mix with the sulfur and nitrogen byproducts of combustion to form sulfuric and nitric acid. And that will start eating away at the engine. The solution is to make sure the oil gets hot enough to boil off entrapped water, so the resulting steam passes harmlessly out the exhaust."

Received another tip from **Joe Cobb** (#590) in Oregon regarding the article in the last issue about "The Thermostat Housing & By-Pass Valve." Joe told me he had overheating problems with his '37 Special that he just could not cure. He tried everything until he finally found the problem.....the bypass valve was stuck because of corrosion build-up on the brass rod which is part of the valve assembly. (See photos on page 18 & 19 of the last issue).

This is the original spare tire on **John Young's** (#1579) '38 Special Sedan Model 41. The son of the original owner says it's the original spare tire. The car's original color was #524 Raphael Green. Wheels on all Rafael Green cars were painted Seven Jay Green with silver outer stripes and a yellow center stripe. See story on John's other '38 Buicks on page 14.

This photo of a '37 Buick coupe appeared on a Mount Rushmore postcard at the time of the grand unveiling of the Lincoln face to the public. It was held on Constitution Day, September 19, 1937.

Here's another Mt. Rushmore postcard showing a '38 sedan with the accessory grille covers. They were made of heavy aluminum finish fabric and held in place by spring steel bars at the top and bottom that snapped in place between the grille bars. They blocked outside air from reaching the radiator, helping the car to run warmer in cold weather. Thanks to **Wayne Chan** (#140) for sharing these postcards.







These top two photos give you an idea of what it's like to test drive your car in snowy Finland. They show **Jari Vuorinen** (#1493) test driving his '38 Roadmaster. He says he is making good progress with his restoration and thanks all the US members who have helped him with parts.

The bottom photo, "Beulah" is a 1938 Buick Special, model 46 business coupe. The owner

found her in Elkins, West Virginia. She has less than 47,000 miles on her odometer (which is still working)!

Thanks to all the members who answered Terry Dunham's request for 1937 and 1938 frame and model data for a research project. Terry used the data in a research project to determine when our cars were built. It had to be done this way because Buick production date information just isn't available anywhere.

Thanks to Terry and co-author David Corbin for spending countless hours figuring out how Buick assigned their frame numbers which will allow us to find out when our cars were built.

The article "**When Was It Built?**" will appear in the next Torque Tube.

A new US postwar car, the Tucker 48, was introduced by Preston Thomas Tucker (1903-1957), who envisioned it as the "**Car of Tomorrow**". (top of page six)

In 1949, Tucker was indicted on 31 counts of fraud, theft and regulatory violations, and his plant was closed after producing a pilot run of 51 cars. He was acquitted in 1950, but no cars were sold on the market. They were auctioned off.

In 1988, the movie, "**Tucker: A Man and His Dream**", directed by Francis Ford Coppola, was released.

The original 1946 Torpedo design was by automotive stylist George Lawson. It had three headlights. One centered that turned together with the steering wheel.

Automotive stylist George Lawson graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Art. He worked at Buick in late the 1930s, where he helped design the 1938 Buick. He met Tucker in 1946 and prepared the Torpedo concept. Later he worked for

Raymond Loewy Associates, Nash, and General Motors in the 1950s.

**Charles Jekofsky** (#524) found this Tucker information on the Internet. Charles says now he knows why the Tucker's taillights resemble the '38 Buick ones.

This unrestored black 1938 Special Two Door Slant Back Sedan Model 44 belongs to new member **Paul Dodge** (#1647) in Ellettsville, Indiana. This is a rare

car as only around 6,000 of these sedans were sold in '38 and only 4 are in the Club including our art director, **Dug Waggoner** (#10). This Flint assembled car was originally painted dark gray with tan Bedford cord upholstery. Welcome to the Club Paul.

**Cecil Don** (#637), one of the nicest men I ever met, died of cancer April 18 at his home in Yuba City, California. Cecil, my wife Margo and I travelled around New Zealand in a 1939 Buick several years ago and I got to know him well. He earned everyone's respect, not through intimidation, but through patience and kindness.

He came home from the hospital to die at home. His little dog Sacha was resting on his chest when he took his last breath. Then she licked his face and started shaking uncontrollably.....she knew she had lost a good friend. And so have all those who knew him!



*Harry*



*Cecil Don and his 1938 Sedan*



Both front and back cover photos were taken last September at the *Art Deco Society's Great Gatsby Picnic* in Oakland, California. The front cover shows the *San Francisco Art Deco Belles* by **Mark Jordan's** (#1297) 1938 Special Sedan Model 41. The Belles are a dance group who preform 1930's style dances. The rear cover shows Art Deco Society members dressed in clothes from the Gatsby Era in front of a 1937 Buick sedan.

# THE SEARCH FOR PAST OWNERS

By **Jim Casey** (#1387)- NSW, Australia

I am an American who has lived in Australia for many years. Having had a long time interest in vintage cars, and the '38 Buick Century in particular, on one of my trips to the States some years ago I decided to see what the possibilities

were of actually purchasing one and taking it home with me Down Under.

As luck would have it, I discovered that my nephew had worked for the owner of a '38 Century and had driven it for several years in a 4th July parade in Mr. Prospect, Illinois. I approached the owner, made him an offer he couldn't refuse and the Buick was mine.

The next obstacle I confronted was getting it some 11,000 miles to its final destination. The proper forwarding agents were organised and all documentation was in order. Everything seemed to be falling into place.

I could never have anticipated that the first stop my



Jim Casey

'38 Century would make would be Singapore, slightly off the intended route. Then I got the further news from the forwarding agent that the ship wasn't coming to Australia at all, but was, in fact, on its way to Tokyo. My car was now doing the round-the-world tour

that I had always hoped to make one day.

Thanks to the quick action by my forwarding agent, he intercepted the container before it ever left Singapore and arranged for it to be sent on to Australia on another ship.

So now, nearly three months to the day after I purchased my '38, a phone call from the local shipping agent informed me that my car was on

the docks and should be picked up immediately.

After getting the Century settled in Australia and many of the minor problems sorted out, I became interested in trying to track the history of my car. The obvious place to begin was to contact my nephew's employer, Wayne Busse, the



Wayne Busse and Jim Casey



(continued from page 7)

more than the fact that the car came from somewhere up north. I found a 1965 Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles Certificate in the back seat springs, with the name Johnson and Wayne County still legible. A mirror found in the car was engraved with the words, Baraboo, WI and a note in the trunk had the name H. Henke on it. Not much to go on but...a long distance phone operator gave me six H. Henke's in the state of Wisconsin, one of whom lived in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Alas, the man wasn't the Buick owner, but he knew Herb Henke from Portage, Wisconsin who drove old cars. At first I was unable to contact Herb, but two days later I happened to be driving through Portage and did meet him. Yes, it was his '38 Century. We exchange photos, letters and found we had a lot in common. Herb has a collection of vintage cars and old farm equipment, a gold mine, except that Herb couldn't remember whom he purchased the car from.

After a great deal of time, effort and the assistance of the Wisconsin State Police, I discovered that the car had been bought from a Reverend Richard Frasier in Lake Mills, Wisconsin. He had



*Herb and Alice Henke*



*Charles and Joanne Wilson*



*Stanley Johnson*

owned the Buick for three months in 1979. He sold it to buy a 1936 Packard which he still owns.

Once again, with my Sherlock Holmes cap on, I found that the Reverend had purchased the car from a Charles Wilson of Oshkosh Wisconsin, who had all the details I could ask for. He was a retired professor, who had rebuilt the engine and refurbished the interior of the Buick in 1977. All he remembered was that the car came from Nebraska.

A Wayne County, Nebraska clerk

gave me Stanley Johnson's address, who just happened to be an old friend of hers. By now I had

returned to Australia, so I wrote to Stanley and he phoned me a week later to confirm, yes he had owned the Buick. Stanley was a wealth of information and was able to find three more previous owners. They were Melvin Miller from Pierce, Nebraska; Clayton Lenox from Norfolk, Nebraska and Lloyd Heckman from Pierce, Nebraska.

Still other details came to light after writing dozens of letters to past owners. The car had been stored in a barn for 14 years in the 1950's and 1960's. Vernon Pfeil, age 84,





*John Pfeil*



*Fred Deutsch and JFK*

the son of John Pfeil who bought the car from the original owners, the Deutsch's told me that the Deutsch's were attorneys from nearby Norfolk, Nebraska. The dealership that the car had originally been purchased from, Breyer Buick, still exists and I have been corresponding with them.

Two nieces of the original owners, Fred and Catherine Deutsch said that they remembered the car and the several trips they took to Omaha, Nebraska. They are both now in their mid-eighties and well preserved, as are their

fond memories of riding in the '38 Buick!

Sue Lawler, one of the Deutsch's nieces, sent me this photo of Fred Deutsch with John F. Kennedy during a visit to Norfolk, Nebraska in 1962. Fred was a Democratic Party official at that time.

It has been a lot of fun tracking down these interesting people over the past two years. The local newspaper, The Wayne Herald, did a story on the car and about my search for information about how it went from Nebraska to Wisconsin to Illinois and then to Australia!

#### **1938 BUICK CENTURY MODEL 61**

FRAME NUMBER: 13271233 ENGINE NUMBER 63407221

BUILD DATE: OCT 27, 1937 FLINT, MICHIGAN

SOLD BY: A.W. BREYER & CO NORFOLK, NEBRASKA

#### **OWNERSHIP HISTORY**

1938 Fred & Cathy Deutsch - Norfolk, Nebraska

1943 John Pfeil Hadar - Nebraska

1956 Lloyd Heckman Pierce - Nebraska

1970 Clayton Lenox Norfolk - Nebraska

1974 Melvin Miller Pierce - Nebraska

1975 Stanley & Tippy Johnson Wayne - Nebraska

1977 Charles & Joanne Wilson Oshkosh - Wisconsin

1979 Rev. Richard Frasier Lake Mills - Wisconsin

1980 Herb & Alice Henke Portage - Wisconsin

1995 Wayne Busse Mt. Prospect - Illinois

1998 Jim & Laurie Casey Kings Point - NSW, Australia

# The Quarter Century Story of my 1938 McLaughlin Buick

By Dick Parkes (#169)

B.C., Canada

Way back in the late 1960's, I was a summer student on a surveying crew and our job entailed surveying rural properties for water licenses. While traveling up a mountainside on a remote back road, we came upon an abandoned farm where an old barn remained alongside the burned out foundation of the farmhouse. We were surprised to find two 1938 McLaughlin Buicks sitting side by side in the barn. After obtaining my university degree and moving back to the area in 1974, I

thought it was time for me to restore a car so I set about looking for a suitable candidate. Most of the cars that I had previously located were now gone, but after a long search I ended up back at the abandoned farm again only to find that there was only one Buick left.

We decided to see if it had an engine, but when I opened the hood, it was completely filled with bits of junk that the rats had deposited there. We started digging through the mess and when we hit the carburetor, we knew that there was an engine in there somewhere. I eventually tracked down the owner who said "Take it away," which I did.

The '38 McLaughlin Buick Special Model 44-19



As found in 1974



1974 - Loading up for the trip home

was moved into my parents back yard where, in my youthful exuberance, I began to tear it apart without regard for putting it back together.

I then purchased a 1941 McLaughlin Buick which I thought could be used as a parts car, but as it was more complete I got it running and have been using it ever since and the '38 was put on hold. Then in 1975, we bought a house with a garage and the '38 was moved home where it was worked on periodically.

A friend, who was a mechanic,

rebuilt the engine and it was installed in the completed frame and fired up.

The body was sandblasted inside and out, which finally removed the smell of the rats and other assorted odors and rust. Trying to get the doors lined up again was an exercise in frustration and after removing, shimming and installing the body about 30 times, I finally gave up for about two years.

Ever since then, I would work on it now and then for a few days and then something else would come up until the summer of 2000, when our oldest daughter announced that she would be getting married in August, 2001, and she would like to go to the church in the '38.



The pressure was now on, so the '38 was dragged out of the carport into the working garage and I got serious. The winter was spent getting the doors to fit, and completing the bodywork. The original fenders were basically unusable, but the replacements also required much work. I painted all the interior bodywork in Oshawa Blue (the original Canadian color), ordered a Hampton Coach door panel and headliner kit (which were excellent) and took the bumpers and grille to the chrome shop. It was now late July, time was running out and I threw up my hands and said that I couldn't make it.

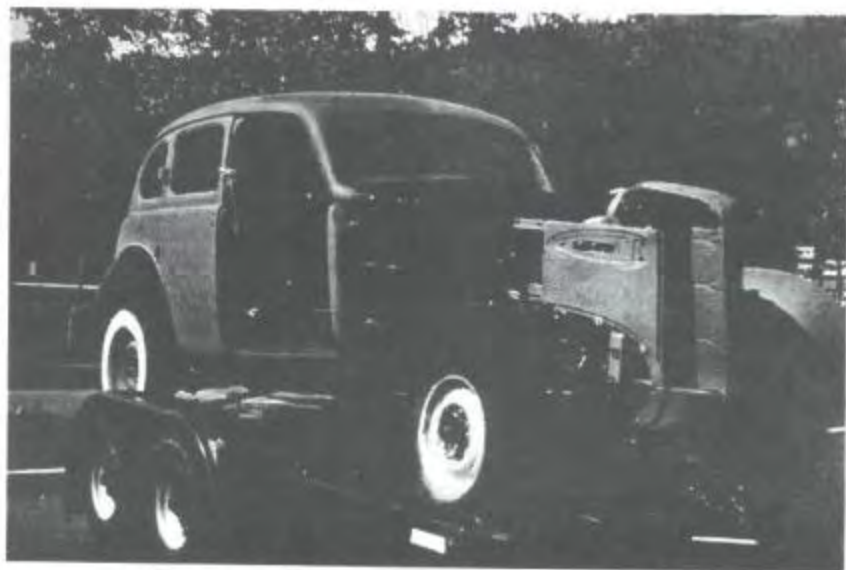
This is where my friends jumped in. One of them built me a wiring harness, then moved into my basement for a week while he installed it. He then came back for another week and polished all of the stainless steel moldings. Another buddy took a week off work and began installing the chrome, running boards, bumpers etc. Still another friend and my future son-in-law showed up to help screw things together. All this time, we had a three-week hot spell of weather into the 100 degree range, and as it was too hot to work in the garage, we moved the car into the driveway under the shade of our chestnut tree. Most of the time I think we were suffering from dehydration.

Anyway, on the Friday morning before the wedding, I'm still sewing up the upholstery on the last seat, but it finally went in that afternoon.

We put some gas in it, bled the brakes, and went for a ride around the block. The brakes were marginal, the engine wasn't quite up to snuff, but we parked it in front of the house and started decorating



1978 - complete engine & chassis with son Dale at the controls.



1983 - Partially completed & going to a car show.



January, 2001 - Painting in the snow.



First drive - August 17, 2001

it, along with four other vintage cars that were to be in the procession.

On Saturday afternoon, we loaded my daughter, her three bridesmaids and her flower girl into the car and off we went to the church, about 15 miles away. The engine stalled once, but we made it.

A large crowd was on hand to see our daughter Holly and the wedding car that they had all heard so much about. Holly and the car were both a big hit and we can all now relax and enjoy the car in our retirement.

Since then we have toured with the car about 50 miles back to the farm where it came from and showed it off to the former owner. He was very pleased to see it again and

told us a few stories about traveling in the car. The best one was that every Friday night, they would slaughter two lambs. The next morning they would put them into burlap sacks, load them

into the back seat and head off for the meat market in town. On the return trip, they would fill up the back seat with bags of grain. It turns out that the '38 was their "goin' to town car."

The final surprise came when they gave me the original registration papers for the car and it was registered to their mother, who just happened to

by my fifth grade teacher. She was always one of my favorite teachers, and I hope the now restored car will be a legacy that she would be proud of.

***"Don't take a car apart  
and try to put it  
back together  
25 years later.  
Finding the parts  
has been a nightmare."***



Dick and wife, Joy - August 18, 2001



# SIXTY FOUR YEARS LATER

By Dave Wettersten (#887)-Wisconsin

This ad is a copy of one that Stephens Buick in St. Paul, MN has hanging in their showroom. The sales manager made a copy of it for me. It was originally published in a hunting magazine in 1938.

Noting that Mr. and Mrs. Curtis R. Larson, who won the Irish Sweepstakes and owned this 1938 Buick sedan, lived at 3500 11st Avenue South in Minneapolis, Minnesota, we decided to duplicate the original ad photo.

Here's what the house looks like today with my '38 Special Sedan Model 41 parked in front of the house. A lot has changed over the past 64 years. The wooden fence and row of trees and window awnings have been added to the scenery. As Yogi Berra said: "It's *deja vue* all over again."



Mr. and Mrs. Curtis R. Larson took a chance on the Irish Sweepstakes—and won.

But when it came to choosing a car they left nothing to chance—they made sure of winning by buying a Buick.

For you're never gambling when you put your money on a Buick. Its look, style, power, is always dependable and steady—keeping you up-dull as along the level with the same facilities, action, the same quick response to your will.

And when the going gets bumpy, the stout coil springs of Buick's Torque-Flex Springing take

the roughness out of "rough road riding." They level out the tough spots—lean and make driving easy—and safer.

There's no lack, either, in Buick's great sales record—it's no accident that it's the car folks most like without. You'll see why when you drop in and look over this great straight-eight that's proved as low as some stars and try out its dazzling power.

**"Better buy Buick!"**

A GENERAL MOTORS VALUE

W. R. STEPHENS COMPANY  
Fourth St. at Harmon and La Salle, Minneapolis

ST. PAUL MOTORS, INC.  
Fourth and Pleasant, St. Paul, Minn.



# MY '38 BUICKS



By John R. Young (#1579)-Louisiana

This is my first old Buick, a tan '38 Special sedan, Model 41 that I bought from former member Ben Jarvis in California. Ben's "Tan '38" as he called it was originally a New York car. We re-did all the chrome, some glass, window seals, motor & transmission supports, torque ball seal, rear NAPA shocks as per *Torque Tube* article, paint work, got the heater, clock and radio working, replaced the temperature gauge and more. Won a 2nd place at a local show. I sold it after purchasing a Raphael green one.

My next '38 is a Raphael Green Model 41 with only 28,000 miles. The car has lived its whole life with two families in Denison, Iowa. It was garaged for many years. I bought it from the son of the second owner.

The car is all original including the spare tire. The wheels are in such great condition, we merely cleaned and polished them, leaving the original finish and stripes intact, just like the spare

We're restoring the car as needed and repainting the body its original **No. 524 Raphael Green Poly** (Duco # 202-52573). Old Duco was a lacquer based paint. The wheel color is **Sevenjay Green** (Dulux #94-20118). Dulux was enamel based. So, the bodies were painted with lacquer and the wheels with enamel. The Sevenjay green wheels have the same tint or shade as the body, but with no metallic while Raphael Green Poly does have metallic in it.



Spare Tire with original Rim.



I sold the Tan '38, had the Raphael Green one apart and went searching for a '38 Century Sedan Model 61. Looking for '38 Century Trunk Back Sedans when they only made 12,000 compared to over 80,000 Special sedans proved to be a challenge. I found a few, but they were either too rough, not correct or too expensive.

I spoke with **Paul Borgwardt** (#1368) (*"Dream of the Century"* Torque Tube Sept/Oct 2001) and admired his luck.

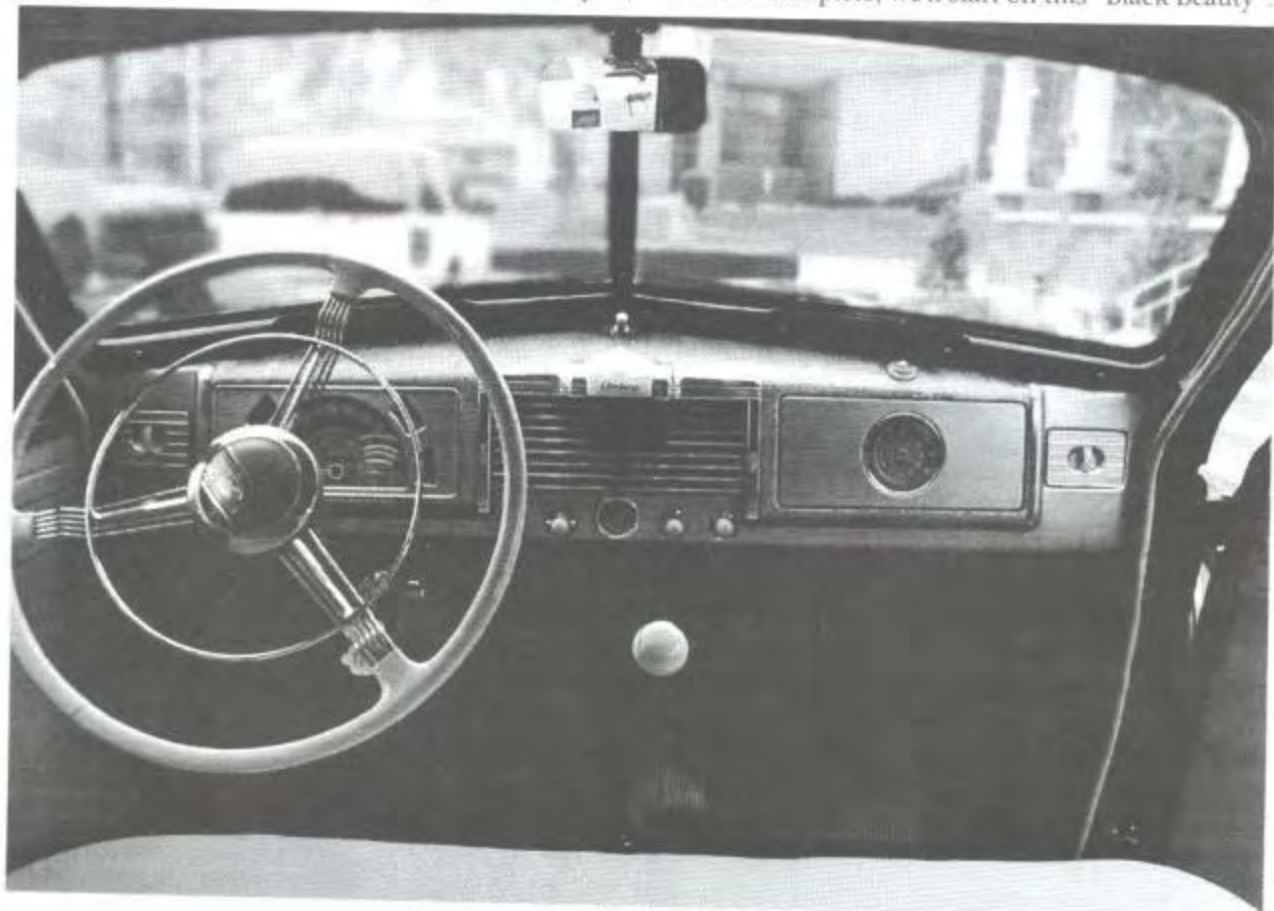
Then, I spotted a small ad in the *Old Cars* weekly listing a '38 four door Century for sale in Pennsylvania. I called for pictures, and nervously opened the mail and saw this green beauty with sidemounts! It was sold brand new and lived its whole life in the Harrisburg, PA area, always garaged.

It's had a re-paint, but is all original with the chevron dashboard and working factory radio using the running board antenna. We replaced the engine and transmission mounts, cleaned sludge out of the pan,

replaced all seals and gaskets, couple of vent window seals and tires and just won a "best original" trophy at a local show.

Well, "when it rains it pours"! During the same time, I spotted another 38-61 ad, affordable but in the Albany, N.Y. area, pretty far from southern Louisiana! After learning the history of this one and making the deal, I booked a transport to pick up both cars on the same load. Now this car is all original, lived its whole life with three owners who all worked at the General Electric plant there.

It still has the original black paint, no rust just a few dings. We cleaned out the gas tank, tuned her up and installed new exhaust system and that 320 engine purrs. Now I have to do the steering wheel. We're going to restore the whole car....it deserves it. It's also has the chevron dashboard and an original mahogany steering wheel. As soon as the Raphael Green 38-41 is complete, we'll start on this "Black Beauty".



'38 Century with chevron dashboard.

# 800,000 MILES *and* STILL RUNNING!

*Is this the world's highest-mileage Buick?*

From the Spring, 1992 *Inside Buick* magazine

On the back cover of the last issue was a photo of a 1937 Buick convertible coupe in Cuba. This car was featured in a story ten years ago in the *Inside Buick* magazine. Thanks to **Craig Allen** (#746) for sharing it with us.



HAVANA, Cuba— Celestino Berrire's 1937 Buick Century is well-known on each of this city's narrow streets. The red antique sits in front of his modest flat at Habana and Obispo streets, where children and tourists come to look.

Ask anyone where to find the city's oldest car, and they'll offer directions to Berrire's driveway.

"Hay un Buick '37 do los mas lindo," they'll say. (There's a very beautiful '37 Buick there).

Other than the makeshift roof, which Berrire took off a Ford, and a Soviet ignition coil, the old convertible has all its original parts.

A Chevrolet emblem he picked up decorates the trunk, but the words "BUICK 1937" were proudly hand-painted on the sidemount hubcap.

The most interesting peculiarity of this relic is that it has traveled roughly 800,000 miles and is still the car Berrire drives to work every day. He has no choice!

Cuba's depressed economy makes it impossible for residents to buy cars, so Cubans lucky enough to own cars stick with them for a long time. Roughly 30 percent of the



cars in Havana are US models from the 1940's and 1950's, according to mechanics here. Prior to Fidel Castro's Communist regime, American cars were as hot as the Latin dance moves on this Caribbean island.

*"We used to call Buicks 'Bu' for short, and if you had one, ooh....it was a big deal,"* said one Cuban woman. But US made cars stopped arriving in Cuba in 1963, after the US trade embargo.

Soviet Ladas and Fiats from Argentina are common now, but if Cubans had their way, they admit they'd buy American.

*"If I could have any car in the world, I'd take a new Buick or Chevy,"* said Berrire, 61, who got his Century in 1954 from a relative. *"These cars run perfect, no matter what you put in them. You could put tin cans in there, and the engine would find a way to work."*

Finding parts for US cars in Cuba isn't easy. In fact, it's virtually impossible. State-run garages and auto parts stores don't carry American products, and Cubans have no access to US suppliers. There are a few mechanics who specialize in US models, and the ones that do must operate from behind closed doors.

Berrire became so frustrated 15 years ago that he wrote a letter to Buick's Flint headquarters begging

for parts. He never heard back. He wrote again. Still no answer. He later learned they never got the letters.

Even if they had, there was nothing Buick could have done on Berrire's behalf. The US State Department penalty for doing business with Cuba is up to 12 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine!

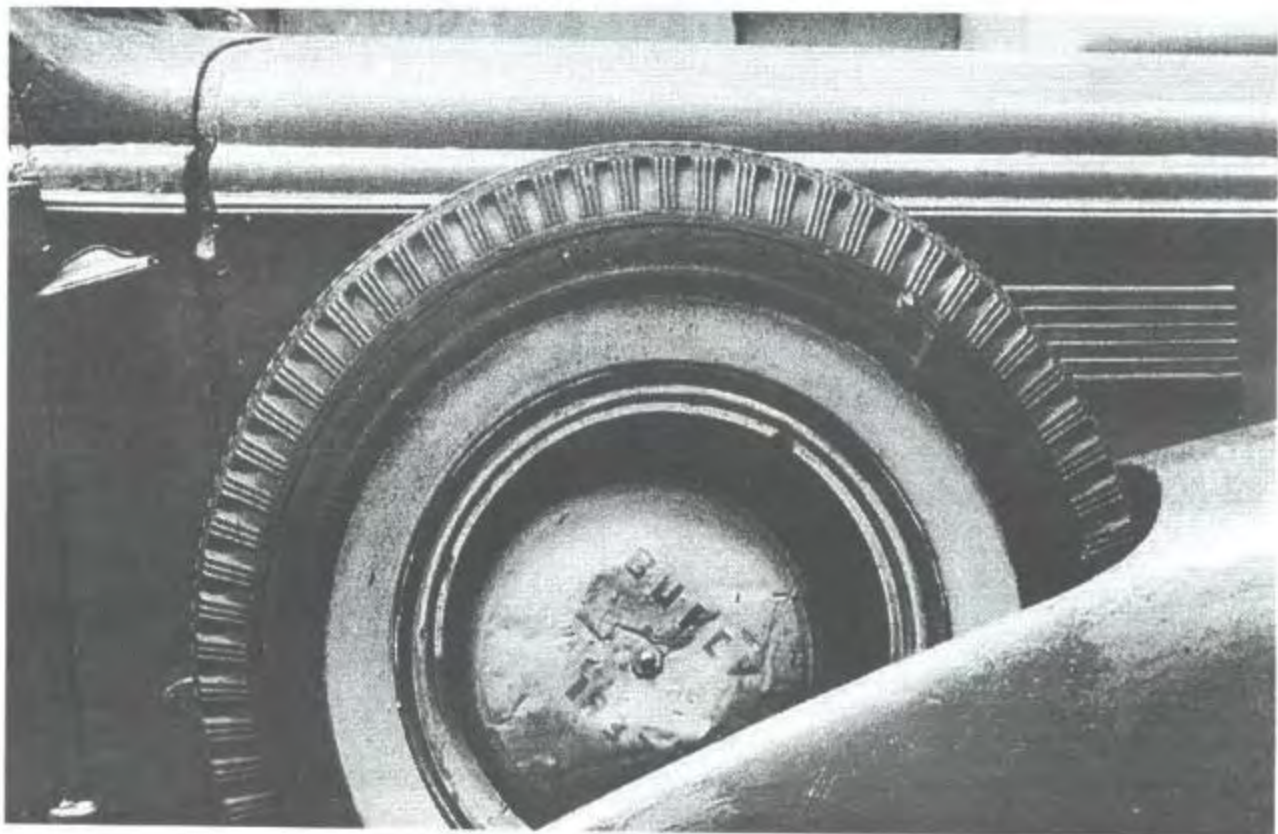
So the Cubans resort to ingenuity. They invent whatever they can. They are very ingenious when it comes to mechanics. If there's any chance it will run, they'll make it run. And they never throw any parts away.

Even changing tires is an ordeal in Cuba. Car owners take the old tires to a factory and receive the new ones a month later.

And gas? It's a luxury here and is rationed. Each family is allowed roughly 50 liters per month, which is equivalent to 22.7 gallons. Considering that older model cars aren't fuel efficient, the typical gas ration doesn't go very far.

*"I used to drive my family across the island in 10 hours in this Buick, but with the gas problems, we don't do that anymore,"* said Berrire.

Car owners here shrug when asked how much their cars are worth. There is no free market in Cuba, so Cubans have no idea what the going rates are. Berrire said the thought of selling never crossed his mind.





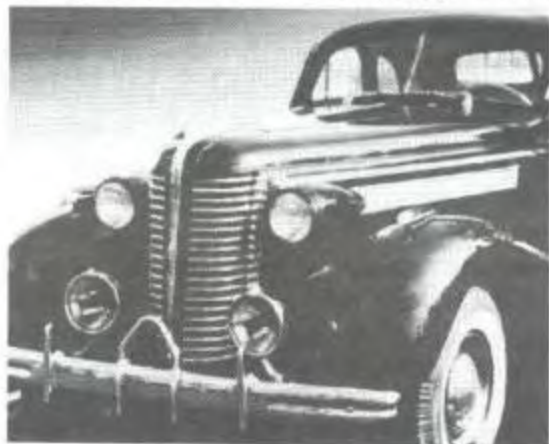


## Technical TIPS

By Bill Malloy (#1539)-Massachusetts

I would like to pass on something that happened to me that other club members might profit from. I never store my '38 Century coupe for winter. Instead I start and drive it weekly or just run it if there is salt on the road. I check the oil level first and close and lock the hood. Next I take off the air cleaner and prime the carburetor with a spray mist of gasoline so the engine does not crank for long.

After it started, I put the air cleaner back on and closed the hood and went for a drive. It was very windy. As I drove down a straight road, I came to an intersection and made a right



turn. I had forgotten to lock down the hood. The wind picked it up and flipped one side over to the other. The noise was unbelievable. Just the sight of one side of the hood slamming down in front of my eyes was enough to turn my hair white (except I don't have any). So remind everyone to pay attention and always lock your hood even inside your garage.

Miraculously not much damage, just the hood hinge is twisted at the end. And what luck, Bob's Specialty Parts has hood hinges advertised in the Torque Tube!

## TRANSMISSION SLIPS OUT OF GEAR

By Bob Ward (#114)-Ontario, Canada

My '37 Big Series Buick's transmission kept slipping out of second and third gear when slowing down. I talked to a friend who was a former transmission mechanic. Although he had worked on automatics most of the time, he was aware of this problem. He told me that unless the synchro gears were damaged, he would just replace the input and output bearings. He also told me it was a simple procedure, in fact the hardest part would be to get the transmission out of the car.

Since I wanted to remove the radiator and would have the front end off, I decided it was easier to pull the engine/transmission than the transmission/torque tube. Once the transmission was on the bench, it was an easy matter to remove the appropriate cover plates to reveal the

bearings. Once the bearing retaining rings were removed, a little wiggle got the bearing out.

A trip to the local bearing supply house was a real surprise. Not only did they not look at me as if I had two heads, but the counter man immediately called out the replacement numbers, went to the stock room and got them (around \$15 each). One had a side cover which I had to pry off. I don't remember which it was but it's pretty obvious when the old and new bearings are compared.

I couldn't feel any play in the old bearings but put the new one in anyway. Since then I have logged about 100 miles with no problems.

According to the 1941 Master Parts List, all '37 and '38 large series cars used the same bearings:

Number in parts book  
Front-New Departure 47507  
Rear-New Departure 43306

Number found on bearing  
New Departure 3207  
New Departure 4330

Replacement  
NTN 620722NR  
NTN 630622NR



# BUICK BOLT CORRECTION

## Technical TIPS



By the Editor



In the November/December Torque Tube, I wrote an article on Buick Bolts. I used a photo like this showing a grade 8 bolt on the left, a grade 5 bolt in the center and an original 1938 Buick head bolt on the right. I wrote if you decide to replace the original head bolts, use a grade 5 or 8. I have since learned that there is another specification that I did not consider, the amount of torque each bolt can withstand.

Both the '37 and '38 Shop manuals do not

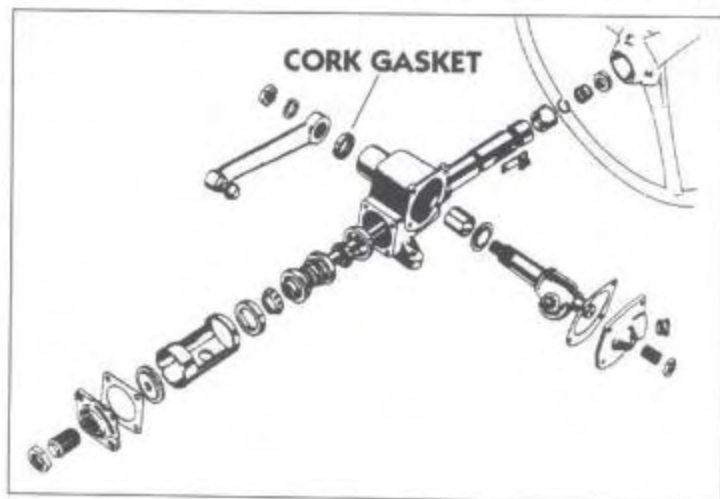
specify how much torque to apply when tightening head bolts. Instead, they say to use one hand on a 9 inch wrench. But my old MoToR's Auto Repair Manual says to use 65 to 70 pound feet. The torque specification for a 7/16" coarse thread, grade 5 bolt, is 38 to 49 pound feet.\* So **DO NOT** use grade 5 head bolts, use either the original bolts or grade 8, both of which can withstand 65 to 70 pound feet of torque! The torque specification on a 7/16" coarse thread, grade 8 bolt, is 54 to 70 pound feet.\*

*\*Grade 5 and Grade 8 torque specifications for 7/16" coarse thread bolts were found in a Dorman Products catalog.*

## HOW I FIXED A LEAKING STEERING GEAR BOX

By Bob Ward (#114)-Ontario, Canada

I worked on my '37 Limited's steering gear box and was able to take a lot of the play out, but found it leaked oil when I was finished. Investigation showed the culprit was the cork gasket on the roller shaft behind the Pitman arm (see the diagram). This was replaced with a new **Federal Mogul Seal #472354** and that stopped the oil leak.





## Technical TIPS

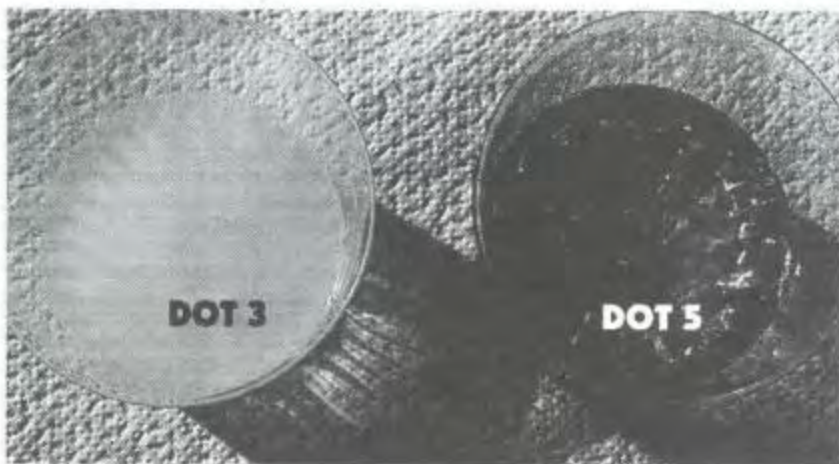
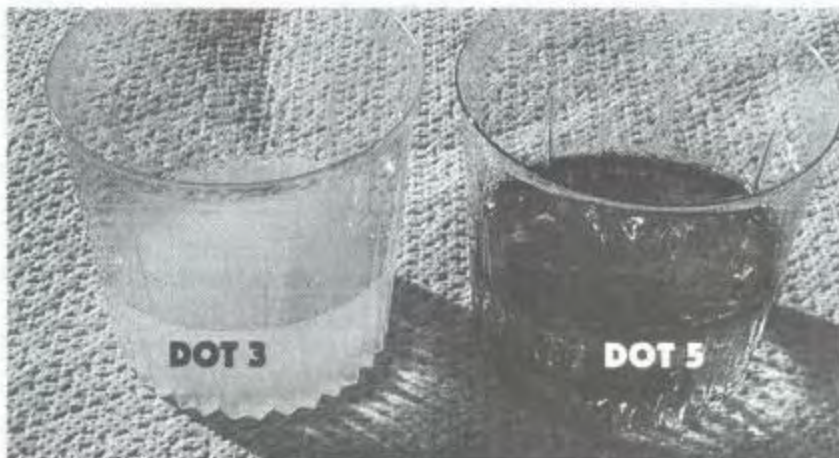
By the Editor

# WHAT KIND OF BRAKE FLUID IS IT?

If you put the wrong brake fluid in your car, you will need to drain and flush the brake lines, refill the master cylinder and bleed the brakes. To avoid this problem be sure to put in the correct type. If you own several cars, some may have DOT 3 (DOT = Department Of Transportation) and some DOT 5 (silicone) brake fluid. Or if you bought a new antique car, you may have forgotten to ask the previous owner what type was in the car. Here's how to find out.

Suck out a small amount of brake fluid from the master cylinder and put it in a glass of water.

If the water turns a milky color, you have DOT 3 brake fluid. If the brake fluid and the water do not mix and remain separate, you have DOT 5 fluid.



Rod Phillips (#1644)  
3137 N. 67th St.  
Kansas City, KS

Timothy Bailey (#1645)  
1403 Bryden Rd.  
Columbus, OH 43205  
37-41

David Aldorfer (#1646)  
876 North Gate Rd.  
Rochester, MI 48306  
37-46S

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Ellettsville, IN 47429  
38-44

Al Srutwa (#1648)  
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Winnipeg, Manitoba  
CANADA  
37-41 McLaughlin

Jerry Drews (#1649)  
6116 North 6th St.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Al Liwush (#1650)  
657 Basket Rd.  
Webster, NY 14580  
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Erik Unthank (#1651)  
26723 N. Iron Cyn  
Santa Clarita, CA 91350  
39-66C



# SERVICING BUICK TRANSMISSIONS

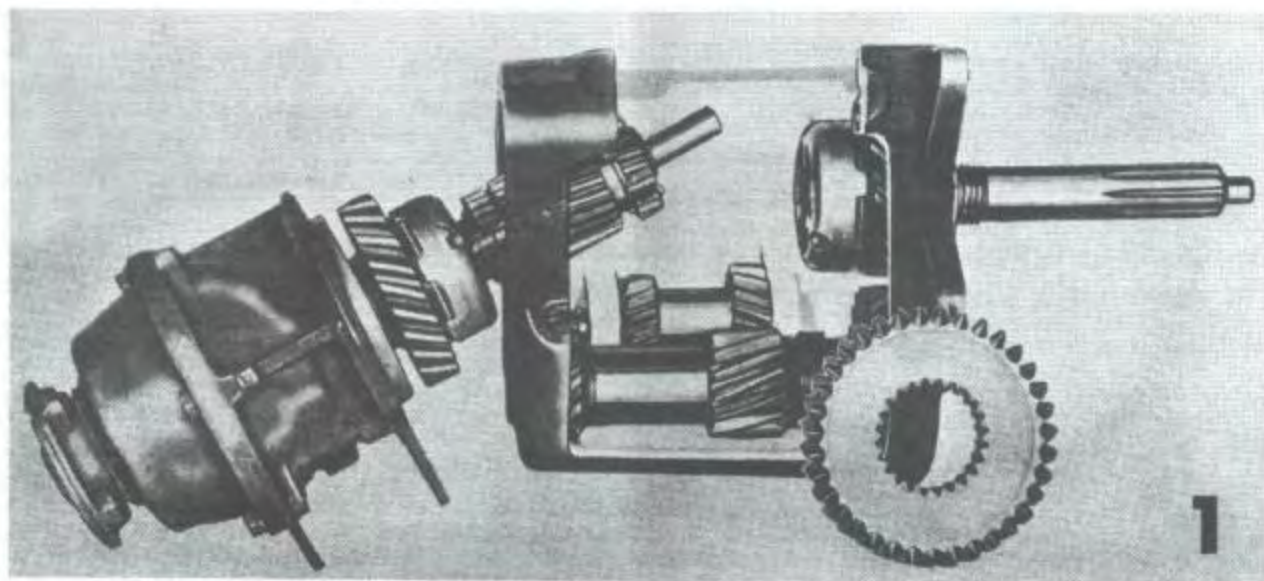
## Technical TIPS



From the June, 1938 MOTOR AGE magazine

By BILL TOBOLDT

**Easy if you know how — and here's how!**



#1 - Removing transmission and plate assembly

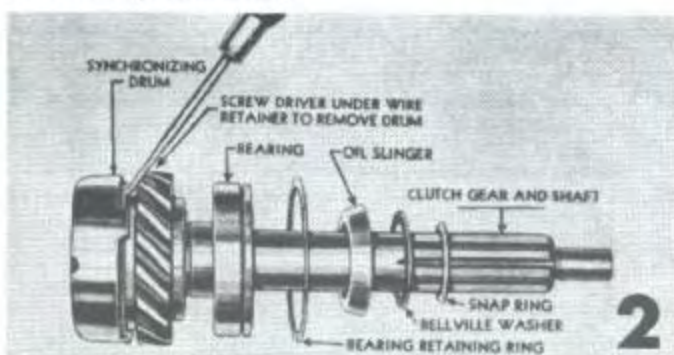
Servicing the transmission on the Model 40 Buick is not difficult, and 7.3 hours is required to do the job according to the Buick flat rate manual. The factory procedure for doing this job is as follows:

First drain lubricant and then flush by filling with kerosene and run transmission in neutral for about 15 seconds. Then drain out the kerosene.

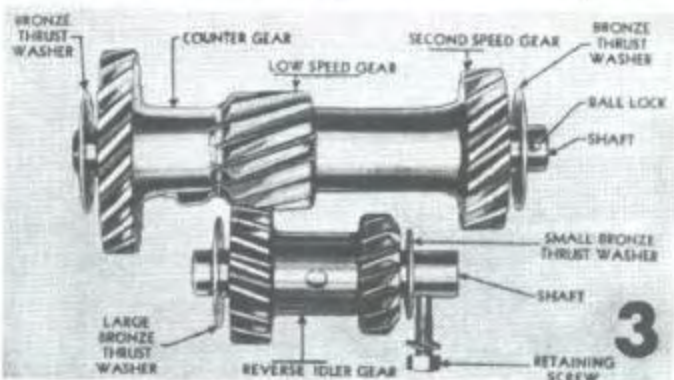
Before removing the transmission, it is necessary to remove the rear axle assembly. This is accomplished by raising the rear of the car with a hoist. Then disconnect parking brake at the equalizer and remove parking brake conduit from lower side of torque tube. Disconnect hydraulic brake line at rear end of torque tube rubber hose connection.

Also disconnect rear shock absorbers at lower end and the rear radius rod at the frame end.

The rear coil springs should then be disconnected at the lower end. And to make sure the springs do not damage the brake lines, tie the lower ends of the springs to rear bumper.



#2 - A wire retainer is used keep the drum on the clutch gear.



#3 - Note the location of thrust washers on the counter gear assembly.



Then disconnect front end of torque tube from universal ball joint and then after raising the rear of the car to obtain sufficient clearance, the rear axle can be rolled out from under the chassis.

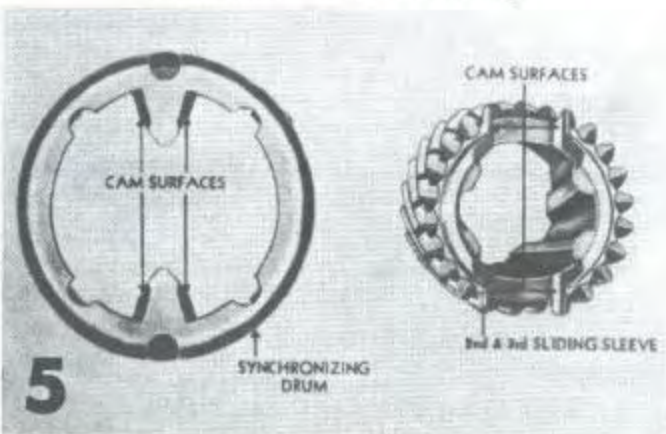
With the rear axle out of the way, remove the transmission support and steady rest rod, taking care to wire the shims to each end of the support so that the correct number of shims will be reinstalled on each side when reassembled.

Next remove one of the cap screws securing the transmission to the flywheel bell housing and replace it with a guide pin. Then replace the other cap screw with a guide pin, and then remove the bolts holding the bottom of the transmission case to the flywheel housing. Guide pins must be used, otherwise, the clutch hub will be distorted and poor shifting will result. With the bolts removed, the transmission can be pulled out.

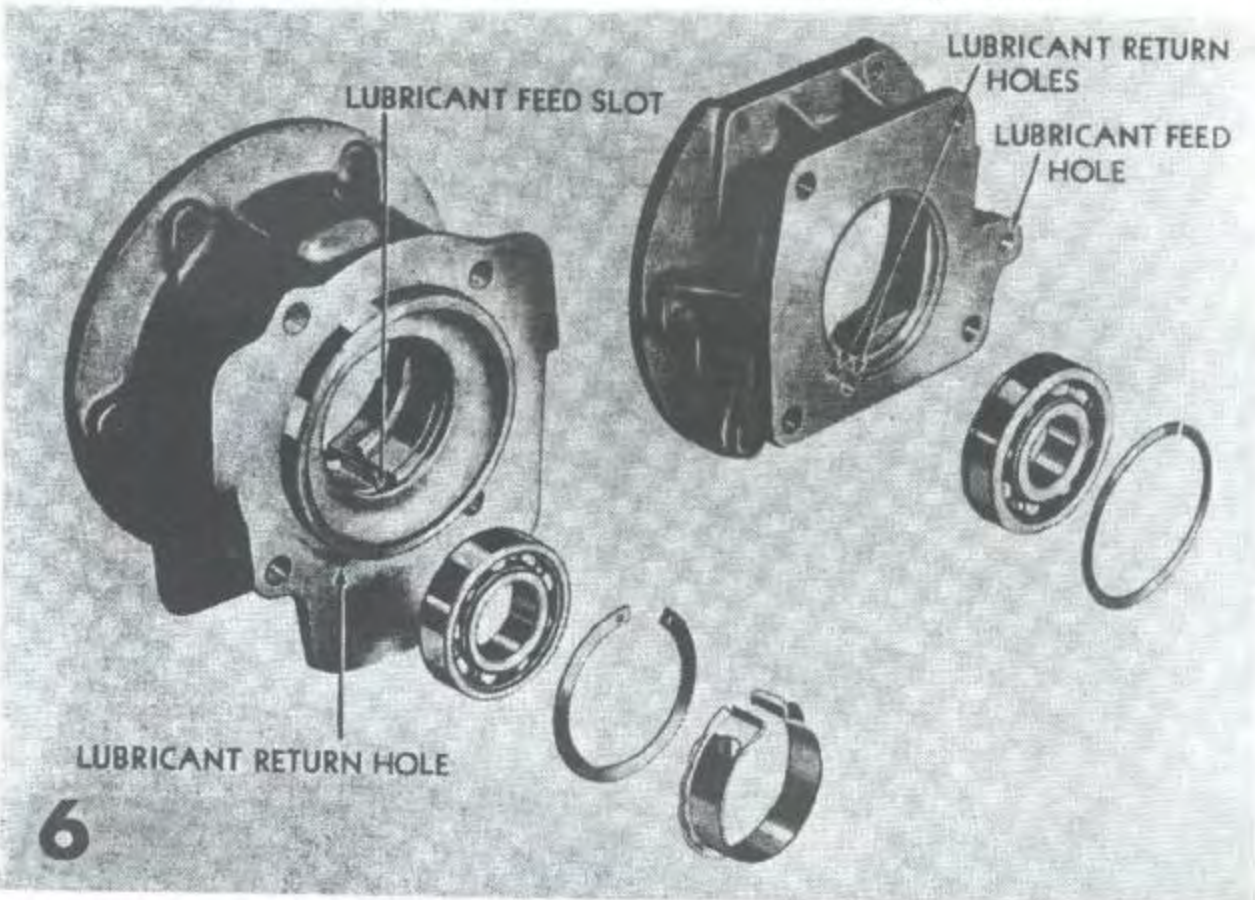
The next step is to remove the transmission cover, the interlock plates, shifter shaft springs and balls, shifter shafts and forks. Remove rear bearing retainer cap screws and



#4 - Transmission main shaft assembly.



#5 - Synchronizing cam surfaces.



#6 - Rear bearing retainer



turn retainer assembly so that section covering rear end of counter gear shaft will allow removal of the shaft. Drive counter-shaft out rear of transmission, taking care not to lose retaining ball in rear of counter gear shaft. Incidentally, all main line shaft parts can be removed from the transmission housing without removing the countershaft assembly if desired.

Remove the universal joint ball and end plate assembly from the back of the transmission. While removing this assembly, hold the

low and reverse speed gear as it will not pass through the back end of the case. **See Figure 1**

Following this, remove the clutch gear bearing snap ring and tap the gear out through the back of the transmission case. The counter-gear cluster can then be lifted from the case.

The idler gear shaft, idler gear and thrust washers can be removed after taking out the lock screw at lower left rear corner of the transmission case.

To disassemble the second speed gear, remove sliding sleeve and detent springs from splined shaft as shown in **Fig. 7**, and then the second speed synchronizing drum by prying wire retainer over edge of synchronizing cone as shown in **Fig. 2**. Next disassemble universal ball, remove universal joint using a puller. Remove transmission rear bearing. The second speed gear may now be removed from the rear end of the splined shaft.

To disassemble clutch gear assembly, remove the high speed synchronizing drum by prying the wire retainer over the edge of the synchronizing cone. Next remove the lock ring, oil slinger and Bellville washer which holds the clutch gear bearing on the shaft. Then remove the bearing by bumping shaft on a block of wood.

This completes the disassembly of the trans-

mission. When reassembling reverse the procedure taking care that the gear teeth are not nicked as such nicks will cause a knock. Also nicks in either bronze or steel cones will prevent proper synchronization of the gears.

The synchronizing cones should have 1/32 inch end play and should show heaviest contact

on their large diameter to give best synchronization. The sliding sleeve on the main shaft must slide freely and be resisted only by the normal friction of the detent springs.

To determine the location of the synchronizing unit when the transmission is in neutral and the cover removed, press down on the retainer ball of the second and third speed shaft.

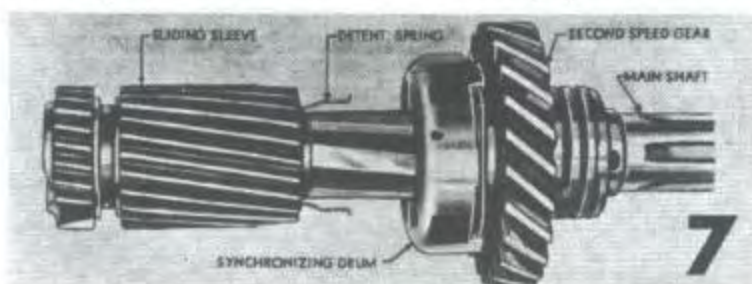
From the neutral position of the synchronizing unit, the forward movement of the shifter ring to engage the clutch gear cone in high, should be less than the rearward movement, to engage the second speed gear cone, preventing drag between the second speed gears which would cause a noise when the transmission is in neutral.

Never polish or change the angle of the bronze cones. However, steel cones may be smoothed up with

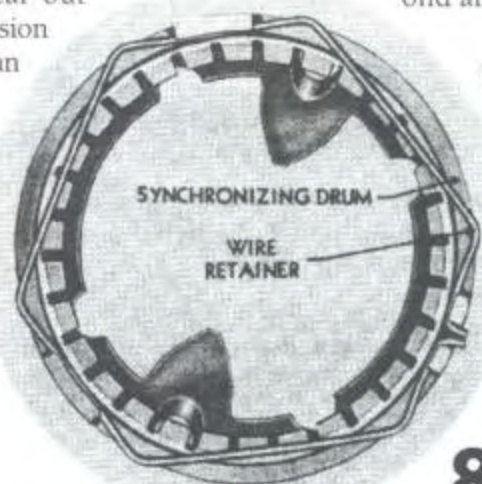
fine emery cloth and finished with polishing cloth. Scored steel cones will result in synchronizing action that is too severe. Always install new snap rings to eliminate the possibility of the old one failing after the transmission is in service.

Proper fit of the sliding sleeve on the main shaft is a selected matched fit made during manufacture. The low and reverse gear fit on the sliding sleeve is also selected. These parts are, therefore, serviced only as a unit.

Another point to observe when reassembling the transmission is the location of the thrust washers. These should be replaced as show in the illustration.



#7 - Second speed gear.



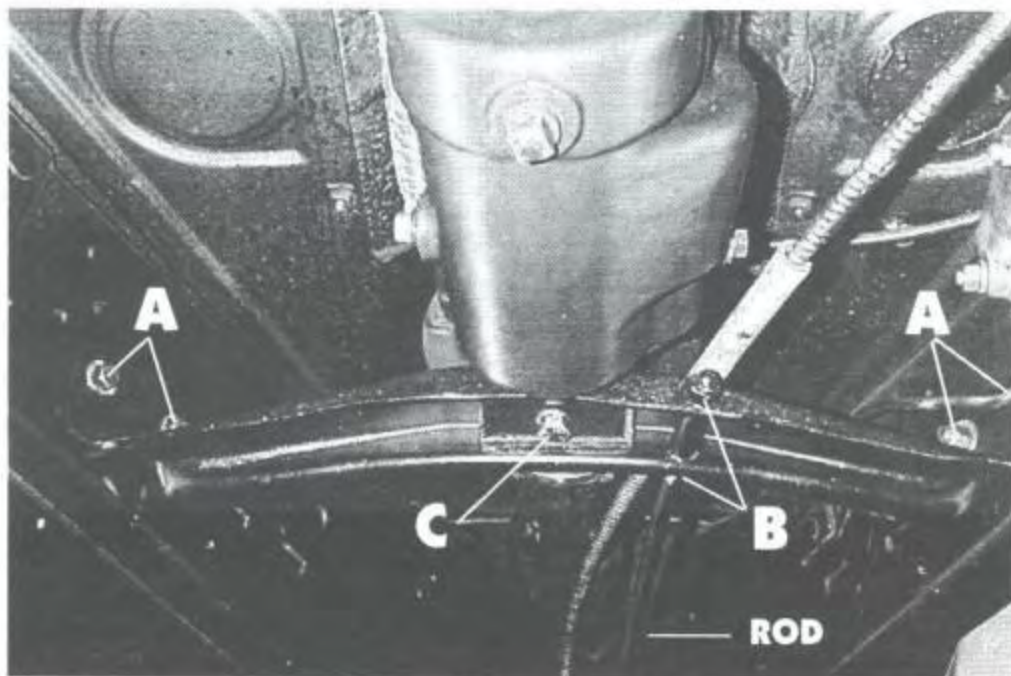
#8 - Synchronizing drum and wire retainer.



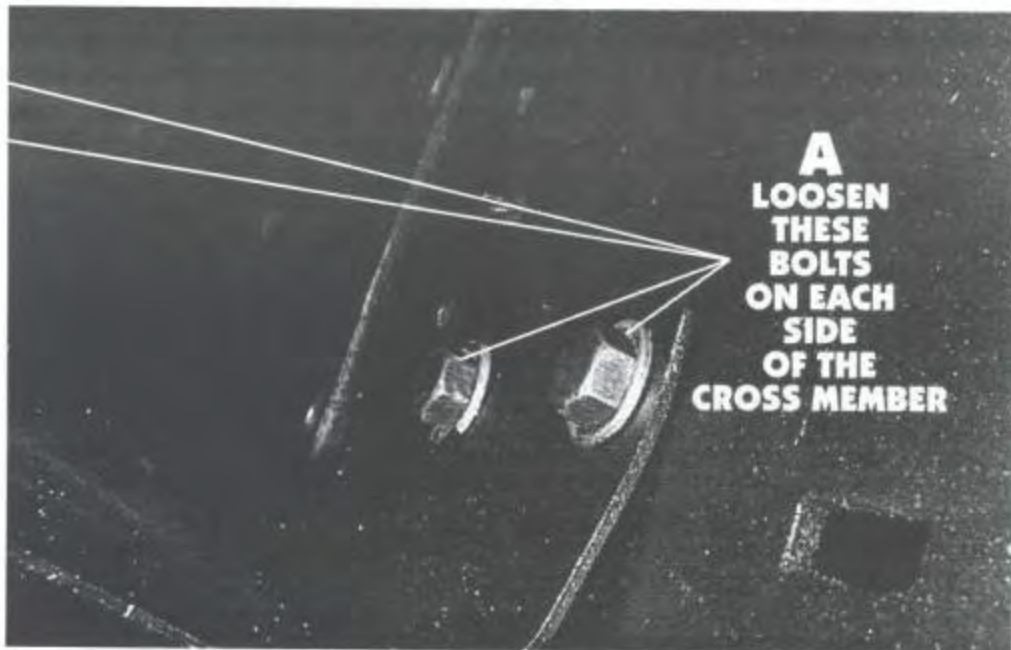
## Technical TIPS

# TRANSMISSION CROSS MEMBER ADJUSTMENT

Special Thanks to the New Zealand Buick Enthusiasts Magazine for the use of this article.



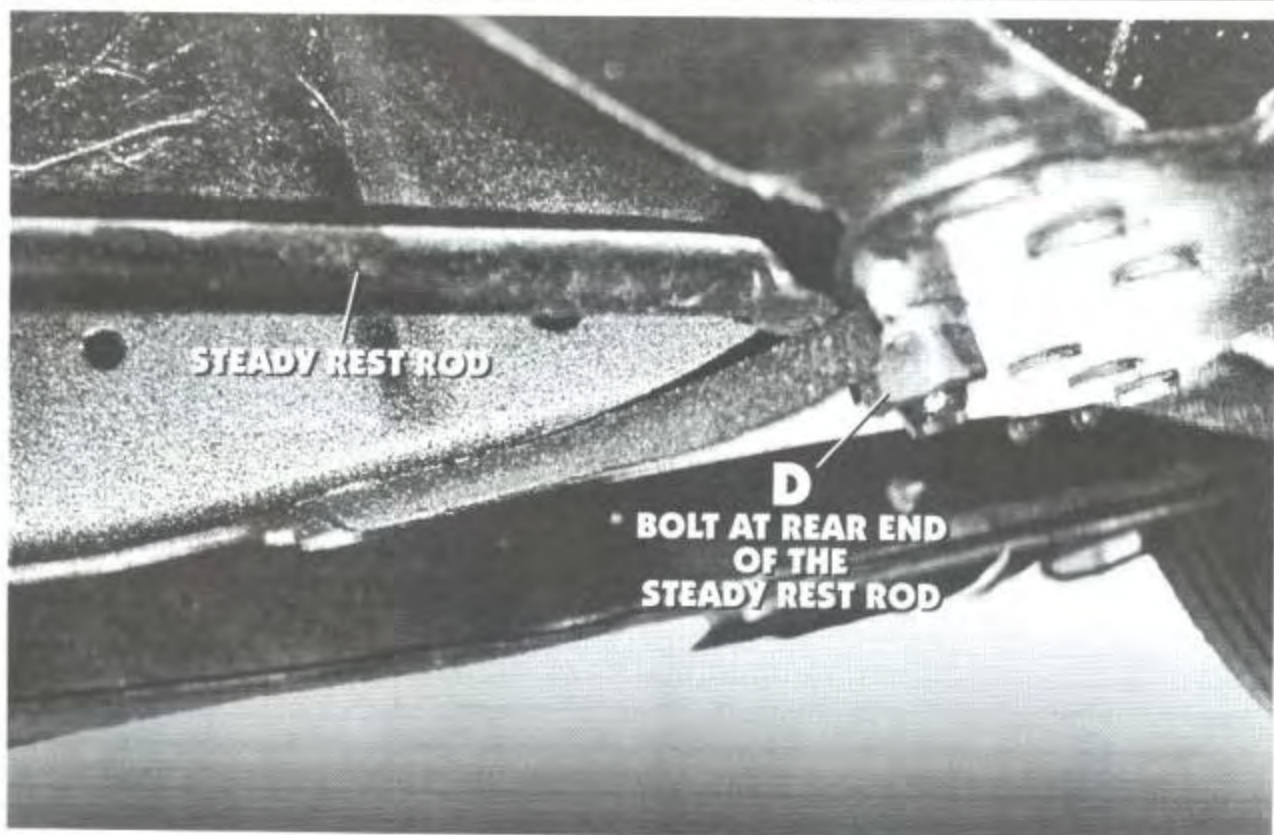
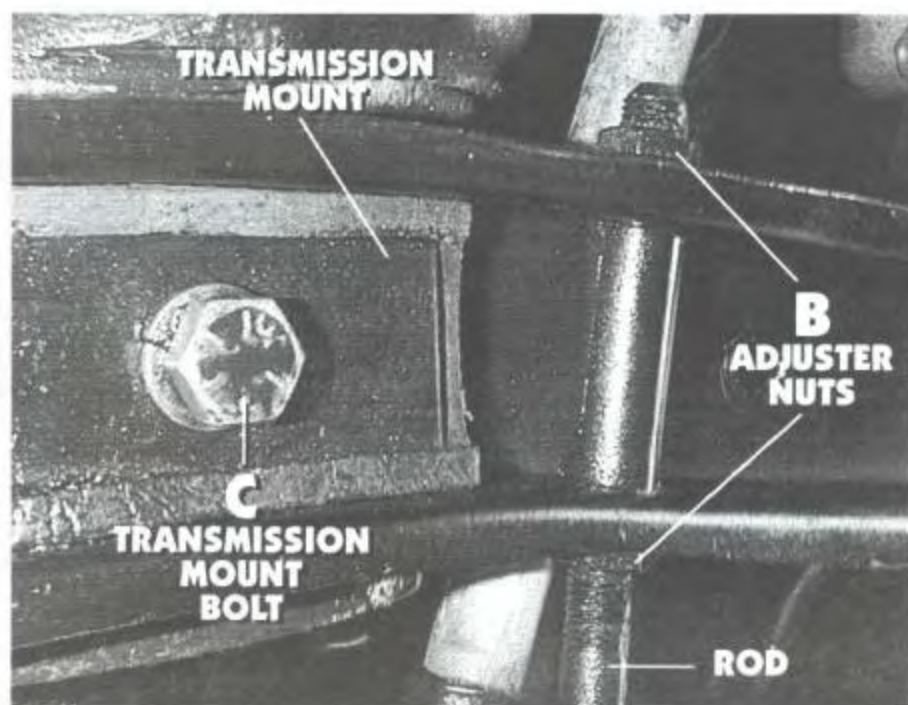
To obtain the correct position as regards the VERTICAL adjustment of the cross member under the gearbox (transmission), which if incorrect CAN CAUSE A NOISE IN TOP GEAR.



First, raise the car up LEVEL, preferably on stands, to enable good access underneath. Next, loosen the four bolts **A**, two on each side, that secure the cross member to the chassis. Loosen them so they are finger tight.



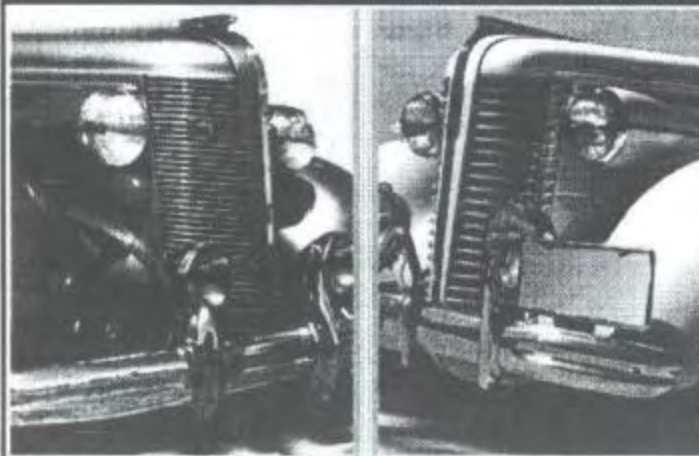
Then loosen both adjuster nuts **B**, of steady rest rod going through the cross member. Next remove the bolt at center of the cross member **C** (the rubber transmission mount bolt). Make sure the threads are in good condition and that it threads securely in the transmission, then tighten this bolt.



Make sure the bolt at the rear end of the steady rest rod **D**, through the X-frame, is secure and tight. Lower the car and drive it around the block, up and down a hill and around a couple of corners. Get the car back on the level. Don't jack it up, but crawl under and tighten the four bolts **A** holding the cross member to the chassis. Do this carefully so you don't push the cross member up or down. Next carefully re-tighten the adjusting nuts at the end of the rod through the cross member. Assuming that the shims to the cross member, if fitted, and rubber transmission mount is in good order, this is a quick way to ensure that there is no strain or pressure on the drivetrain at the transmission end.



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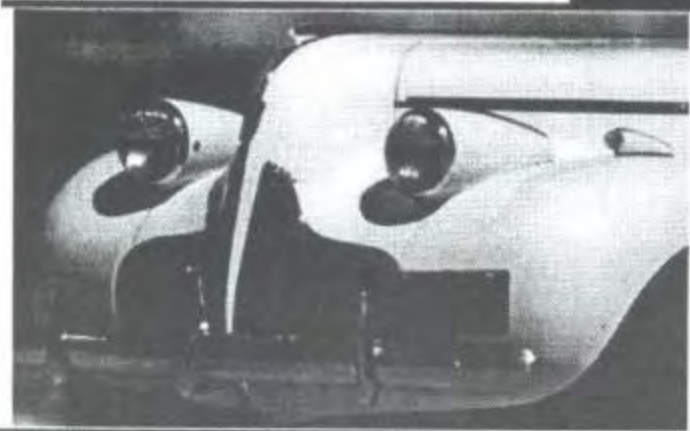
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After your ad has appeared once, the Torque Tube will rerun it one more time if you ask. The best way is to e-mail or mail your ad. Include a photograph if you wish. See the masthead on page 2 for Torque Tube's e-mail and postal mailing addresses. If you want to run an ad continuously, inquire about our business ad rates.

# Parts FOR SALE

### • 1937 & 1938 PARTS:

Parting 1937 and 1938 Buicks. The following is just a portion of what's available. Call with your needs.

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Large Series AA-2 Carburetor, complete .....	\$300
Cigar lighters .....	\$25
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40/60 Series rear brake cables, good condition .....	\$40 pair
Century radiator .....	\$75
Special radiator .....	\$75
Rear springs 40 & 60, good condition .....	\$100 pair
Radio delete plates .....	\$15
Small series throttle linkage .....	\$25
Big Series rocker assemblies .....	\$50
Fender lights .....	\$65 pair
Trunk lights, complete .....	\$50
Tail lights with lenses, all series .....	\$50 pair
Wiper transmissions .....	\$50 pair
Special manifold .....	\$75
Throttle cable .....	\$20
Special transmission .....	\$100
Special splash pans .....	\$40 pair
Century hood .....	\$100
Headlight switch .....	\$20
Radio grilles .....	\$15
Wiper motors .....	\$15
Trunk hold-up arms .....	\$20
Sun visors .....	\$20
Bumpers .....	\$40 each
Bumper arms .....	\$15 each
Steering wheel .....	\$50
40 & 60 running board brackets .....	\$50 set
Buick creast badge for hood trim strip .....	\$50
Gas pedal .....	\$15
Small and large series generators .....	\$75

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Slant back sedan trunk lid .....	\$175
Slant back sedan rear vent windows .....	\$100 pair
Special generator .....	\$75
Coupe & convertible seat, complete .....	\$200
Century motor, complete long block .....	\$500
Limited door sills .....	\$75 set of four
Breather tubes .....	\$10 each

(Parts For Sale continued from page 21)

734Z starter with solenoid .....	\$50
Special hood lettering .....	\$20 pair
Rear license plate stand, bracket & light for sedan .....	\$45
Assist straps with screws .....	\$10 each
Throttle cable .....	\$20
Special radiator .....	\$75
Battery tray .....	\$20
Special manifold, complete .....	\$75
Special hood sides & tops .....	\$25 each
Century radiator .....	\$100
Owners manual and other misc. original glove box literature .....	\$75
Hubcaps, used .....	\$25
Clock .....	\$40
Century splash pans .....	\$100 pair
Cigarette lighter, complete .....	\$25
Century Hood, complete with center hood hinge .....	\$200
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<b>* 1937 &amp; 1938 PARTS:</b>	
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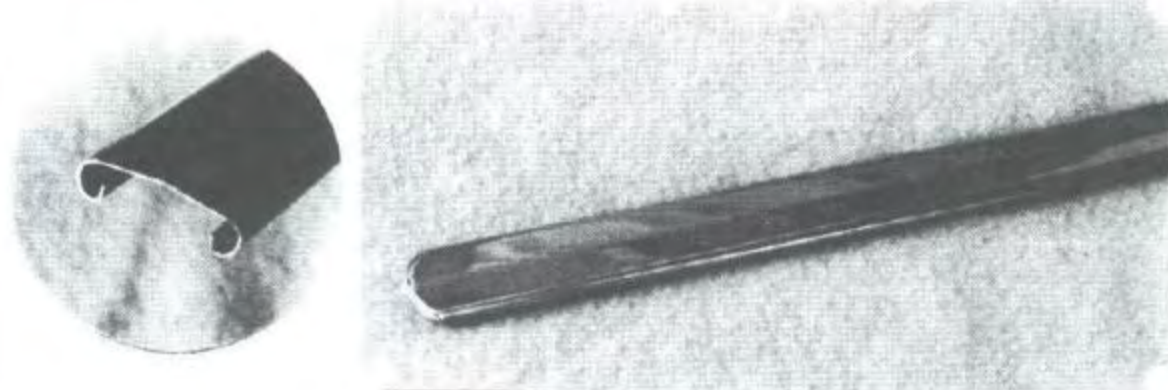
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